ANTONY GORMLEY

REBECCA COMAY - BODYBUILDING

From EXPANSION FIELD, Hatje Cantz and Zentrum Paul Klee, 2014

There are no wall texts in 'Expansion Field' - no map, no signage, no words in sight. And that's a nice touch, if only because it blocks the nervous shuttling from pillar to post, from work to caption - the hypnotic tug of title, description, explanation, interpretation that can be so blinding in every museum. Who hasn't had that sinking feeling upon leaving an exhibition of having spent more time in the gallery reading than actually seeing? Antony Gormley's decision to withhold textual apparatus might forestall death by caption - the avalanche of language that can so easily smother a work by turning it into an illustration, allegory, manifesto, message from the beyond - what Robert Morris once described, in his own somewhat suffocating language, as the 'tangled, suffocating, shroud of seething words'. [1] Words can compensate for the distance of the thing and they can tame its strangeness - they can at once bring the object closer and keep its intrusiveness at bay - but they can in turn produce their own distancing and stifling effect. [2]

This touches on a question that Gormley's work makes particularly vivid, and not only because by now there's such an enormous nimbus of commentary collecting around the corpus: there are already dozens of catalogues, essays, monographs, artist's statements, and endless recorded interviews, television appearances, and lectures by Gormley himself, who is more explicit and articulate than anyone about his own work, and almost as prolific with words as he is with lead and iron. His website is prodigious, exquisitely organised, every project gorgeously documented and annotated, the bibliography ever swelling, and you can spend all day, every day, living in this ever-expanding virtual universe, as I've been doing these past few months, without being certain that you're ever getting any closer to the work itself. [3] This isn't just because it's at once so obdurately physical and yet so ephemeral, impossible not to notice when you run into it and yet gone forever once the show's over - popping up unexpectedly on remote mountain tops, in distant deserts, on beaches, in fjords, in unusual urban settings (also, it is true, in museums, but rarely permanently and always in peculiar ways), and just as suddenly disappearing, leaving its indelible footprints everywhere, if only in the collective memory and in the swelling archive of photography, rumour, reportage, and documentation: this spot on the bridge, that busy intersection, this alleyway, this rooftop, that corridor, this flooded crypt, that window ledge perched high above the traffic of downtown Manhattan. There's an oddly impinging and yet constantly receding aspect of the work, connected to its strange theatricality, and the proliferating stream of commentary both relieves and anxiously underscores this looming physicality.

The question of how we speak about artworks connects to the question of how they speak to us: how can a thing - a hunk of inert, inanimate matter - make a claim on us, when does a mute object begin to call upon us, how does it activate our senses and feelings, why does it provoke our sociability in the way it does? What must we do to the thing to make it speak to us, and what can we do for it (this is a very different question) to allow it to do so? When we recognise something, when we register its presence as somehow mattering to us, is it because it resembles us, because it's how we want to look, because we need to find affinities or objective correlatives in the outside world; or is it rather because it fundamentally doesn't resemble us, and therefore allows us to set our stamp on it, mark it as our property, put it to work, use it, enjoy it, or consume it? Is it because we feel entitled, beholden, responsible, guilty, ravished or ravishing, or some mixture of the above? Why does a mute object make us want to talk so much, and how can a lifeless object induce the feeling that we ourselves are somehow 'more' alive for being in its vicinity? Kant spoke of the heightened Lebensgefühl, the quickening of our vital powers that is occasioned by the experience of (what he called) the beautiful, and he linked this feeling of enhanced vitality to our feeling of enhanced loquaciousness. Art activates the so-called sensus communis: we feel a burning need, in the presence of certain objects, to seek out the assent of others. 'This is beautiful!' 'Yes, this is beautiful!' Or, more modestly: 'Yes, this is art!' Or, even more minimally: 'Yes, this thing speaks to me too...' Our feeling of being both sentient and talking creatures is somehow sustained and heightened by the silent pressure of non-living things in our environment. [4]

The technical term for this rhetorical operation is prosopopoeia. We endow the inanimate, dead or absent object with a human countenance: we supply silent things with a 'face' or (usually) a voice or at least an ear - think of Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' - and in return we receive back from the world an echo and confirmation of our own subjectivity. The ventriloquism can go in all directions and the results can be confusing. Are we ventriloquizing the object, making it speak to us or for us, or is the object ventriloquizing us? Are we animating the dead material, lending voice to the voiceless, or is the object animating us, by constantly prompting us to talk about it and on its behalf? We cannot rule out a third possibility: that there may be a stage director silently lurking in the wings, a kind of omnipotent, omniscient big Other (the imaginary figure of the artist, for example, or the personified 'art world' or the voice of conscience or, in shorthand, God) who is listening to us, even scripting our lines for us, while we ourselves become lifeless puppets idiotically repeating what we think they want to hear. Even as we infuse the object with significance, rubbing it with human meaning like Pygmalion polishing his statue, we are ourselves being continually interpellated, spoken to and by a language which is not our own, which we may poorly understand, and which we are condemned to recite mindlessly like a dead language. It's hard to write about living artists: there's a tendency to get sucked into the orbit of their intentions, and we sometimes wish we could silence them for just a moment or to stop our ears before we too turn into another bit of the machinery. And so the fragile boundary between the living and the dead, the mute and the speaking, and the human and the inhuman, is continually being redrawn.

Antony Gormley's works look human - sort of. There are sixty of these things waiting there behind those doors, lined up in a rigid grid of rows and columns, five across, twelve deep, a parade of soldiers standing at attention, a field of megaliths, a cemetery, a post-holocaust memorial, a ruined temple, an Egyptian hypostyle hall of roofless columns, a Roman encampment, a modern city, a modernist construction, a cubist assemblage, a minimalist arrangement of endlessly repeating series, an algebraic table, a conceptual art chart, an abacus set up in some ancient duodecimal numbering system, or some other computational device. Viewed from on high (this is actually impossible during the exhibition, but there was still a ladder in the room when I managed to see the work while it was being installed just before the opening), the whole thing vaguely resembles a city seen from the air. From higher, it starts to look like a kind of chessboard; from higher still (although now I'm starting to imagine things), a photographic contact sheet; from yet higher, a jumble of pixels on the computer screen or an electronic file badly in need of defragmentation. From certain angles, when you squint, the whole field has a slight look of performance art, or a game of 'statues' where all the players have been caught frozen mid-gesture. There's also a bit of Marey or Muybridge: tiny fragments of congealed motion, mounted at regular intervals, although the specific progressions here are enigmatic, as if the various film strips have been scattered and the sequences all interleaved. The whole set-up has a distinctly archival whiff. The field resembles a collection of mysterious industrial artefacts, otherworldly objects assembled on a vast horizontal landscape, each torn out of context and arranged with Becher-like neutrality and precision, joining the gas tanks, blast furnaces, water towers, and grain elevators of another epoch. As these last few comparisons suggest, the whole thing is spectacularly photogenic (the intense lighting also contributes to this

effect), and there will be more to say about this connection with photography. The emptiness of these containers (oddly, but evocatively, Gormley refers to them as 'Tankers' [5] is palpable and audible; if you bang them (which you can't, at least not during exhibition hours), they clang loudly. Their emptiness resonates: in a world of rapidly depleting resources these empty tanks, or tankers, might stand as a premonitory rebuke. [6] I'll come back to this.

I'm running through these associations (others are possible) not to suggest a kind of historicist mélange or antiquarian sampling, but to gesture to the disconcerting shifts in temporal as well as spatial perspective and scale. This is an intervention - Gormley often uses the scientific, medical vocabulary of testing, experimentation, evidence, and diagnosis (occasionally, but not often, of healing) - into our temporal as well as our spatial situation. The artist provides no viewing platform, no privileged perspective from which to take in the whole field at a single glance; nor is there a synoptic standpoint from which to survey the historical horizon. This will frustrate any attempt to insert the work into a coherent art historical trajectory (a frustration that will be familiar to art historians who have tried to locate Gormley's work within the itinerary of postwar sculpture), for reasons that the viewing experience itself makes palpable. Our access to both space and time is through an intermittent and unrepeatable series of discontinuous and interwoven pathways. Any coherent narrative will be impossible, if only because there is no unified time scale by which to calibrate the changes (we are moving simultaneously through incommensurable time zones and periods: minutes, decades, centuries, geological and cosmological epochs), and because neither starting point nor destination are self-evident or stable.

The historical disorientation begins as soon as we walk into the room. All that rigid orthogonality seems oddly anachronistic in this building, whose sweeping curves defy the tectonic prop and stack conventions of architecture, whose very floorboards are without straight edges, and whose load-bearing walls are minimal and barely register in our visual field. [7] And all this industrial heaviness feels anachronistic in a setting where we can still almost smell the fields we've just walked past on our way into the museum, and can still feel underfoot the cobblestones of the beautiful medieval streets just across the river. There's something abrasively untimely here: the work feels at once centuries too early and a few decades too late. At once a modernist intrusion into the bucolic past and a relic from the industrial era, it exerts the intrusive pressure of a time out of joint - simultaneously futuristic and strangely retrograde. This will destabilise every sense of our own historical location as we teeter precariously between the industrial and the information age. The work seems at odds with the most recent vocabulary of building, and even with the tensile capacities of its own materials: iron behaves differently these days than it did a century or two ago. The pale steel girders shimmering on the outside of Renzo Piano's building advertised this fact to us only minutes before we entered the gallery. If there's a hangover from the industrial epoch, this is neither from nostalgia nor simple inertia; the dissonance hints of a utopian promise lingering on if only in the archive of missed opportunities. The material has a not-yet and no-longer entirely industrial appearance. If you look closely, you can see that it's too clean to be really functional. Straight from the steel mill, it's missing the scratches and marks of the warehouse, it hasn't been stacked or banged around by forklifts, and there's none of that coded writing that's usually stamped on sheet metal before being sent out to building sites. [8] Impeccably polished, it's a bit too beautiful to be put to work: it's been snatched from the womb and preserved like a specimen in embalming fluid. The polish, the curiously named Renaissance Wax, is a beeswax and microcrystalline compound (microcrystalline is a petroleum product) often used by museums for preserving antique furniture and armour. Ironically, the only trace of fossil fuel in these empty tankers has been smeared on the exterior as a protective amulet with a magical promise of rebirth. But the process of entropy can be forestalled for only so long.

Everything was constructed in a steel factory in Germany. But the process began in Gormley's London studio, starting as usual with the imprint of the artist's own body. The human stamp is now in its fourth decade of re-edition. [9] Antony Gormley doesn't set his body in plaster these days. An optical scanner, or more accurately, a living, breathing human assistant, takes a 3-D impression, passing a kind of wand over the surface of the artist's body (in the BBC documentary, it looks like there's a sparkle of fairy dust swirling all around his limbs and torso), while another assistant sits at a monitor transferring the image to Rhino, a modelling software application often used by architects and industrial designers. [10] This means the 'exposure time' is now a few seconds, rather than a few hours, as in the past, when the pose had to be held until the plaster dried and the casing could be safely cut open; it also means that the artist is no longer pushing against the limits of physical endurance, so that the repertoire of poses has been greatly expanded. There are some uncomfortable looking neck twists and back extensions that would have been impossible to sustain using the old technology. The shortened interval between the body scan and the final digital 'cast' also means, by Gormley's own account, that there is a delayed feedback loop from screen to posture, such that the pose is retroactively conditioned by its own outcome. In other words, the immediacy of the 'now' - the time of the pose - is explicitly triangulated by memory and anticipation. And the software itself has enabled some surprising geometrical transformations.
But the basic ontology and logic of the work remain the same. Despite the superficial anthropomorphism of the sculpture (one of the most frequently voiced suspicions about Gormley's practice in an age dominated by post-minimalist abstraction), it has never been a question of representation or imitation. What is stake is rather a question of imprint and reprint: a singular pocket of lived time and space captured in a receptive medium which forms an infinitely repeatable mould - like a signet in sealing wax or a death mask in plaster. There was always something suggestive of photography in Gormley's early iron and lead body casts, and this may have contributed to their uncanny, spectral quality: hundreds of life-sized replicants scattered across the globe have an unnerving impact. This immediately connected to a well-established mortuary trope, from Roland Barthes to André Bazin and Rosalind Krauss, linking the indexicality of photography to that of the fossil, cast, or death mask. [11] Photography is like a cast or fossil: it involves the direct inscription or impression of one body on another (in this instance: light bouncing off an object onto a photo-sensitive substance that can preserve and replicate the unrepeatable encounter). Early photography had an intuitive sense that all this was somehow more than just an analogy. As if already commenting on the ontology of the new medium, Daguerre's first photograph, from 1837, is of a still life arrangement of plaster casts in an artist's studio, followed a couple of years later by a collection of fossils and shells.

The analogy with photography was palpable in Gormley's early work and may have contributed to the endless photo-ops this work occasioned: those heavy leaden bodies also look good on camera. In his recent work, the connection is explicit: whereas previously the cast had behaved like a camera, here the camera is producing the cast. And the basic vocabulary of photography is being systematically exploited - repetition, enlargement, magnification, superposition, close-up, blow-up. The digital scan gets redrawn on the screen, the internal cavities of the body getting stacked or 'seeded' (Gormley's studio technicians use an interestingly botanical, vitalist language) with an array of simple rectangular blocks and cubes, which are then manipulated according to an arbitrary but consistent mathematical formula, each pose (there are 21 in total), presented at differing stages of expansion, like a series of time-lapse photographs, and the various results distributed in a seemingly random, but actually carefully selected, concatenation across the floor grid. Rarely are instances of the same pose contiguous, and rarely is a given pose presented more than once according to the same orientation. [12] This can make comparison challenging. It takes a while before you recognise that specific poses are being repeated. There's a gesture towards seriality - there are occasional pockets of repetition- but this gesture is immediately broken off as soon as it has begun, every series arrested before it can get securely identified as one, as if the train of thought keeps being initiated only to be immediately interrupted. There's the barest trace of minimalism, as if minimalism itself has been minimised or abridged, abbreviated to its own minimum condition of possibility. What is the least number of repetitions necessary to construct a series? And what is the greatest number of repetitions that can be

endured?

This is not a proportional or scale enlargement of the sort Gormley has elsewhere experimented with, most famously with his colossal ANGEL OF THE NORTH towering high above the motorway at Gateshead. The expansion is here taking place at the level of the component cells, which are each individually growing in regular increments in all dimensions, according to a mechanically applied algorithm, without regard for each other's boundaries or for the integrity of the body envelope, which is being breached from within, the exterior invaded by its own tumorous interior. As the cells expand, both the individual parts and the overall shape become increasingly distorted, the human form incrementally swallowed up by its own aberrant internal geometry, losing all depth and definition. Even as everything is being pressed outward, the distinction between depth and surface, between contents and container, between parts and whole, is becoming indiscernible - pure 'expression' or expressivity without anything to express. The inside is turning into its own outside, extruding its own carapace like a snail its shell - a kind of exoskeleton formed by the repeated churning of the interior, in the manner of a cocoon or burrow. Everything is becoming increasingly architectural, increasingly vegetal, increasingly landscape-like - the Caryatid metamorphosing into her column, Daphne into her laurel tree, Niobe into her mountain (there's a bit of Ovid) - slightly robotic, even vaguely insectoid (there's a lot of Kafka)…

As the individual cells enlarge, they start to coalesce, invading each other's boundaries and swallowing up each other's space. Even as everything is dilating, extending, becoming more and more visible and expansive, it's also contracting, becoming increasingly abbreviated, compacted and inscrutable, the human form buried inside its own 'extimate'[13] interior, secreted (in every sense) outwards into invisibility. Gormley sometimes speaks cosmologically, comparing the architectonic dilation of body parts to the entropic expansion of the galaxies, the inner infinity of our own bodily sensorium to the sublime infinity of the starry heavens. But in another sense we could see a massive compression or condensation - matter collapsing in on itself until no light escapes the gravitational field. Everything visible is being sucked into invisibility, like a gigantic black hole. Everything is exploding and yet everything is contained, at once bursting and confined within expanding but strictly demarcated limits, in a kind of metaphysical spasm.

I mentioned a minute ago that Gormley almost immediately arrests the series he opens up: were it to continue to infinity, the parts would all consume each other and every tanker would end up abbreviated into one enormous cube. And at this point the shape would stabilise. Any change introduced by further expansion would become indiscernible, a question of degree and not of kind - a difference of size only. At the limit, every sculpture would become visually indistinguishable from every other. Any distinguishing mark would be squeezed out to the outer edges of the cube, where the residue of the original configuration of blocks would linger on in a complex tracery of grooves and corners - a subtle bevelling effect that would blur the edges of the object, becoming increasingly imperceptible with every subsequent expansion until the last vestige of the human would eventually disappear. [14]

Fully transparent to itself, the cube demonstrates the geometrical formula of its own construction with perfect Cartesian clarity. It is fully legible from every angle; the spectator's point of view becomes irrelevant, which means that whatever else is gained from the experience of walking around the thing, this cannot be at a simple cognitive level: you already 'know' what awaits you just around the next corner, so the only lesson to be learned is about your own bodily involvement and investment in the act of viewing itself. The cube can be infinitely repeated without any loss of information, and the outcome of the series can be predicted with perfect accuracy. This is of course why the cube had appeared to be the perfect minimalist artwork: it had the self-referential or tautological transparency appropriate to a 'specific object', and could be both generated and comprehended with minimal human input.

Gormley stops the machine long before this happens; he arrests the expansion process long before the human form disappears into the material like Michelangelo's slave into the block of marble. Why? He says it would be 'boring'. [15] This might be true, although boredom is itself an interesting emotion (or lack of one): it forces you to a reflexive engagement, if only with your own disengagement, and by this point carries a weighty historic charge, ranging from existentialist dread to the often contradictory experiences associated with the repetitive rhythm of the late capitalist machine, ranging from exhaustion, anxiety, lassitude, restlessness, depletion and surfeit to over- and under-stimulation (one can never be sure of the difference, which is in itself an interesting paradox). But there are other adjectives I could also think of: scary, for one thing. By the time every tanker had expanded to the point of being a cube, it would have grown to such a size that it would have invaded all the surrounding passageways, impinging into the spectator's space and blocking every possible vantage point, becoming invisible if only because it would have eliminated every possible viewing position. Each sculpture would encroach on every other's space until eventually all sixty tankers would have consumed each other and fused into a single enormous cube, by which point the thing would have crushed every bystander, pierced through the lovely curvaceous roof of the Zentrum Paul Klee, and broken into the fields beyond, sculpture overcoming architecture, the contents larger than their own container. [16] Or rather, since sculpture and architecture had at the outset, arguably, already traded places, this outcome would just make explicit the logical inversion that had been in play from the very start. Isn't Renzo Piano's museum, like so many other items in the contemporary 'art-architecture complex' in some sense more like a sculpture than a building? [17] And isn't EXPANSION FIELD in some sense more like architecture, even more like a city, than like sculpture? The confusion between inside and outside, between contents and container, between parts and whole, and between art and architecture, has been at work from the moment we entered the building, and even before. Any sense of scale was ripped away the moment we caught a glimpse of those three white hills nestling amidst the green hills - building turning into landscape, landscape into sculpture - the end of the telescope constantly switching sides, everything simultaneously enlarged and miniaturised, at once smaller and bigger than itself, the whole world oscillating in and out of focus long before Antony Gormley came along with his expansion method to confuse matters further.

In 1962, Tony Smith constructed (or more precisely, phoned in instructions to the Industrial Welding Company, in Newark, New Jersey, to have them construct) his evocatively named DIE cube, to measure exactly six feet in all dimensions. His oft-quoted explanation touches on minimalism's own complex relationship to its own impending monumentality, a relationship that only Richard Serra, to my knowledge, has overtly acknowledged or explored. 'Why didn't you make it larger so that it would loom over the observer?' 'I was not making a monument.' 'Then why didn't you make it smaller so that the observer could see over the top?' 'I was not making an object.' [18] Whatever you make of this as an explanation, Smith's specifications are telling: the cube accommodates the length of an (ideal) man placed in any position, whether standing erect or lying prostrate six feet under. This is something that Smith's critics were quick to notice, notably Michael Fried, who would condemn Smith's sculpture, and minimalism generally, for its overblown and perverse brand of anthropomorphism. According to Fried, the human presence that had been explicitly evacuated from the sculpture (the erasure of figure, style and all traces of artistic and artisanal genius) had been creepily reinstated by the work's ostentatious impingement on the spectator's physical and mental space. [19]

Gormley's tankers are each expanded at dramatically different rates, but a six foot cube is definitely not on the horizon. It would take a very large number of expansions for certain poses to get swallowed up into a cube, while other poses disappear relatively quickly. But even the smallest

possible cube would end up measuring some ten metres in all dimensions and would weigh in at almost 15,000 kilos. Interestingly, the hardest posture to efface is also the most culturally oversaturated. This is the figure standing erect with outstretched horizontal arms - Christ, of course, but also the Vitruvian homo ad quadratum, as famously illustrated by Leonardo and visible today on every one-euro coin in Italy: the man whose measurements were to reflect the cosmic harmony of the created universe and to supply the proportions for the built universe. [20] With legs and arms perpendicular, the Vitruvian body describes a square; with limbs spread-eagled, a circle. This cruciform figure happens to be one of the first shapes you see upon entering the exhibition hall and you'll encounter it three more times in course of the exhibition. Even without all the cultural baggage it's easily the most identifiable shape in the whole installation, and of all the tankers seems to lose least in translation. Your eye instantly registers the formal repetition without pausing to think or make comparisons. In this sense the figure provides an immediate hermeneutic key to the whole installation: it alerts you to the governing principle of seriality at work throughout. The pose is by far the most recalcitrant one in Gormley's whole repertoire: it would take a very enormous cube to swallow up those long outstretched arms. By the time the arms got visually absorbed by the vertical sides of the tanker, the whole thing would have to have grown to some 58 metres in all dimensions - over five times taller than the height of the roof, and almost the entire length of the exhibition hall. At this point the tanker would weigh in at over 650,000 kilos and would be all but impossible to budge.

It might seem as if the sculptures are all on the side of stasis, standing there motionless like soldiers and built to last forever, while we, the spectators, are all in motion, as we navigate our way around the sculptures and perambulate the gallery space, our necks aching, our eyes straining, our mortal bodies flagging. Each sculpture occupies only one place but has exclusive claim to it, whereas each spectator can occupy multiple places, but only one place at a time, and without any special claim to any of them. The intransigence of these objects is palpable and can be painful. There is at least one spot where you can easily bump your head if you come too close to one of those outstretched arms hanging into the corridor, as I found out the hard way, and many other places where you feel squeezed out by the sheer hulk and bulk of the objects, in Richard Serra fashion. Despite or because of the rigidly constructed grid (the centre of each tanker is set at a uniform distance from all the adjacent ones), the actual spacing is irregular and unpredictable due to the great fluctuations in overall dimensions. The passageways are continually shrinking and widening as the sculptures swell and contract. And because the expansions have not been arranged sequentially, [21] this also produces some surprising variations in the visual horizon. From certain perspectives, clear avenues open up, reminiscent of the grand boulevards of the nineteenth century city, with their promise of infinite vistas to a better future. (Walter Benjamin associated the open sight lines of Haussmann's boulevards with the imperialist myth of endless, uninterrupted progress. [22]) From other spots, the space looks cramped and 'medieval', full of impasses and abutments; you can occasionally see tunnels and bridges, formed by the visual juxtaposition of cantilevered extensions; and your sense of access is continually shifting, together with your awareness of your own physical and mental limitations. Time moves unevenly in this place. You're always stopping as you catch sight of similarities, start making mental comparisons, retrace your steps, get tired, move on too quickly, stare for a while, get distracted, start to feel unsure if you've looked long enough, or well enough, or the right way, or in the right place, wonder why you're feeling so compelled to keep making comparisons in the first place, get bored, wish no one was looking so you could touch the thing, fight back an almost uncontrollable urge to hit it, madly start photographing, get tired, get captivated by some stupid detail, get drawn into the momentum and grandeur of the parade and go back again for another round.

But the sculptures also display a peculiar temporality of their own: despite all that polish, they're already bruised by travel (they didn't arrive by miracle), scuffed by the frottage of the packing material, spotted in places by handling and touching, and they bear the contingent birthmarks of the process of their own manufacture. There are lustrous greyish-blue patches where the metal cooled unevenly in the steel mill; there is the occasional, almost imperceptible bulging at the surface of some of the larger pieces, where the heat of welding caused the metal to buckle slightly; and there are dark bluish discolourations streaking around all the edges, also caused by the heat of the welder's torch. These streaks, unintended but deliberately allowed to remain in place, draw attention to the extensive network of painstakingly drawn lines of gleaming solder, exquisite in their penmanship, like brushstrokes. Gormley describes them as 'lines of concentration'. [23] You can literally see the time pulsing along these silvery seams - thousands of hours of accumulated human labour deposited in the joints of the finished product like cast-off snakeskin. [24] They also highlight the fact that the containers themselves are hermetically sealed and empty.
Apart from the final polishing, the welding was the only part of the work actually done by hand, or at least involving direct contact (digital manipulation does usually involve fingers, as the name suggests). The contrast between the industrial-scale sheeting and the intensely detailed 'stitching' (as Serra once referred to welding) has some affinities with the earlier work of David Smith and Anthony Caro, and points to Gormley's own ongoing investment in the constructivist legacy. The visual contrast between seam and surface makes visible, too, the ongoing antinomies of capitalism itself - the unresolved contradiction between collective modes of production and individual modes of enjoyment - without seeking to alleviate or embellish them. [25]

Visually accentuated in this manner, the soldering produces a strangely diagrammatic effect: you have the sense you're looking simultaneously at both a sculpture and a drawing. There's a peculiar temporal convolution: it's as if the work has somehow folded into itself traces of the prior process of its own design, as if the architectural blueprint were still legible on the surface of the finished building - an encrypted memory of a once projected future. [26] Curiously, the most suggestively artisanal, most 'bodily' residue of the production process manages to draw attention to its seemingly most 'virtual' or 'disembodied' aspect, as if the logic of digitalisation is somehow thickening or materialising before our very eyes. There's a strange convergence of the new and the old. This is just one of the many temporal disturbances that pervade this disorienting work.

1 'The wall label disturbed my sleep. It grew to threatening proportions, entwined itself around me, babbled in my ear, wrapped itself over my eyes. It was a tangled, suffocating, shroud of seething words in my dreams… Now I am awake, yet the wall-label begins to shrink. Here beneath the dim lamp its rectangularity seems to pulsate, its language groans and threatens…', Robert Morris, unpublished 'dream diaries' from 1993, quoted in W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Wall Labels: Word, Image, and Object in the Work of Robert Morris', in ROBERT MORRIS: THE MIND/BODY PROBLEM, (exh. cat.), Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1994.
2 This is a generic point about all writing about art. The modern formulation of this problem goes back at least to the Romantic period. Hegel, observing an increasing disproportion between the artwork and the surge of critical commentary it precipitated, announced the death knell of art as such and, notoriously, celebrated this death. He saw in the ineluctable overtaking of art by language-about-art - the eclipse of 'art' by 'philosophy of art' and eventually by 'philosophy' simpliciter - the ultimate triumph of spirit over its own corporeal conditions. Philosophy's task would be to clarify the truth of a religion (Christianity, obviously) that had remained ambivalent and confused about its own incarnational commitments. See G.W.F. Hegel, AESTHETICS, T.M. Knox (trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975. This might seem like a fusty way of putting it; for the past two centuries everyone has been updating Hegel's observation. Walter Benjamin's theory of allegory was developed largely to account for the shrivelling and subsequent reanimation of things in the modern, disenchanted epoch, from the German Baroque era to the world of nascent consumer capitalism. Under the gaze of the seventeenth century allegorist, dead things came alive, just as, under the gaze of the window-shopper two centuries later, commodities began to 'speak', to seduce and beckon the dumbstruck onlooker. See W. Benjamin, ORIGIN OF THE GERMAN TRAGIC DRAMA,

John Osborne (trans.), London: Verso, 1977, and ARCADES PROJECT, Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (trans.), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. The personification of things is always in strict proportion to the reification of people, for reasons Karl Marx spelled out in his analysis of commodity fetishism. See K. Marx, CAPITAL, Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (trans.), Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1887, vol. 1., ch. 3.

3 This is the place to acknowledge the generosity of the entire crew at Antony Gormley Studio, in particular Adam Humphries for his extraordinary helpfulness regarding the technical details of the design and production, and Rosalind Horne and Maeve Butler, for supplying me with lavish documentation and research materials. Above all I want to thank Antony Gormley for his unwavering generosity and support; his own articulateness about his project has been nothing but inspiring, if a little daunting, and this essay owes a great deal to numerous conversations, during my studio visit in London, in Bern, and over the phone. I'm also very grateful to Peter Fischer, for inviting me to Bern to see the installation process in person, an experience that would have made me completely revise the writing of this piece even if my computer hadn't got stolen on the plane home (so, thanks to the thief for that too, I guess), and to Simone Küng, Hannes Dubach, Michael Baumgartner, and the staff at the Zentrum Paul Klee for their wonderful hospitality and assistance. I also thank the translators, Tarcisius Schelbert and Suzanne Schmidt, for their exceptionally thoughtful work, and Frank Ruda, for helping think through some difficult formulations. Finally, I want to thank Andy Payne for his very generous help discussing architecture and anthropomorphism, and for helping me navigate my way through Vitruvius and his afterlife.

4 Immanuel Kant, CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT, Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

5 'Tankers' is the most recent category of sculpture listed on Gormley's website, joining the many other series of sculptures, which have been classified since 1973: 'Bread works', 'Box works', 'Blockworks', 'Ball works', 'Cube works', 'Memes', 'Beamers', 'Proppers', 'Framers', 'Liners', and so on.

6 Gormley has made frequent comments on climate change in various statements, including: 'Antony Gormley, Art in the Time of Global Warming', in LONG HORIZONS: AN EXPLORATION OF ART AND CLIMATE CHANGE, London: British Council, 2010.

7 In previous museum shows, Gormley was working with and against more familiar architectural conventions - for example, the neoclassical space of the Hermitage museum, or the brutalist architecture of the Hayward Gallery, or the eponymous neutrality of White Cube (both Hong Kong and London) - so it was a question of interrogating Euclidean orthogonality from within. He tested this geometry in a variety of ways - for example, by challenging the conventional use of walls and corners (and ceilings), by occupying unusual zones like corridors, or by expanding the space of the museum altogether by extending the work into the adjacent urban environment. The viewer was thus forced to think about spaces that are normally invisible and taken for granted. Gormley's approach is very different here, if only because Renzo Piano has already appeared to suspend all these architectural conventions on his own terms. There's no orthogonality here to comment on, except that introduced by the artist himself. Rather than defamiliarising the familiar, or making our habitual bodily comportment strange to us, Gormley is invading the new, post-whitecube museum setting with remnants of a Euclidean rationalism that has now begun to strike a historically discordant note. We still inhabit these bodies that have been weaned on Vitruvius, schooled in classicism, and trained in modernism, we still keep setting up our encampments, building our block towers, cruising our highways, and one of the effects of this installation is to make us aware of this historically engrained spatial habitus.

8 Compare MODEL (2012) in which the industrial writing is clearly visible on the surface of the construction.

9 Antony Gormley produced his first body mould in 1980, BED (1980-81), a hollow in the shape of his body created by eating into a bed-shaped slab composed from 600 loaves of 'Mother's Pride' sliced white bread (over a period of three and a half months).

10 See the BBC film, ANTONY GORMLEY: WHAT DO ARTISTS DO ALL DAY?, television broadcast, BBC Four, London, 2014.

11 Roland Barthes, CAMERA LUCIDA, Richard Howard (trans.), New York: Hill and Wang, 1981; André Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', Hugh Gray (trans.), FILM QUARTERLY, no. 13, 1960; Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the Index. Seventies Art in America', OCTOBER, no. 3, 1977, reprinted in THE ORIGINALITY OF THE AVANT-GARDE AND OTHER MODERNIST MYTHS, Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 1985.

12 The arrangement here is thus in sharp contrast to Gormley's early 'Expansion' series, examples of which are also presented in the exhibition in FULL BOWL (1978), FLOOR (1981) and ONE APPLE (1982) which show an incremental progression along more recognisably minimalist lines. In EXPANSION FIELD, there are only two instances of contiguous iterations of the same pose, and only one instance where these are oriented in the same direction.

13 'Extimacy' (extimité) is a Lacanian neologism to express the complicated relationship between inside and outside, between container and contained: at the most intimate core of the subject is a kernel of unassimilable or intimate exteriority - 'something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me' (See Jacques Lacan, Seminar 7: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, Dennis Porter (trans.), New York: W. W. Norton, 1992, p. 71).

14 You can see an example of such 'bevelling' in MURMUR (2014), a room-sized rod construction created by the same expansion algorithm, and the only expansion piece that Gormley has allowed to develop to more or less cubic proportions. There are to date no 'Tankers' or 'Blockworks' expanded to this point, although Gormley has produced a miniature 3-D model of such an expansion.

15 Press conference, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, 3 September 2014, and repeated conversations.

16 At this point the conglomerate cube would measure approximately two hundred metres in all dimensions and would weigh almost seven and half million kilograms. Thanks to Adam Humphries for cranking out these imaginary statistics for me, as well as the ones below, and for all his help with diagrams and other technical assistance.

17 See Hal Foster, THE ART-ARCHITECTURE COMPLEX, London: Verso, 2011.

18 Tony Smith, quoted in Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture: Part II', ARTFORUM, vol. 5, no. 2, Autumn, 1966, p. 21.

19 Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', ARTFORUM, vol. 6, Summer, 1967.

20 As Indra McEwan has shown, there was an explicitly ideological dimension to all this harmony: under Augustus, space was being reconceptualised to fit the requirements of the new imperial order. See McEwen's fascinating exploration of the imbrication of building, bodies, and empire in I.K. McEwen, VITRUVIUS: WRITING THE BODY OF ARCHITECTURE, Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2003.

21 This marks one key difference from Peter Eisenman's HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL in Berlin, with its wave-like slopes of incrementally increasing and decreasing tombstone-like blocks.

22 W. Benjamin, ARCADES PROJECT, op. cit.

23 Press conference, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, 3 September, 2014.

24 To be precise: 4025 metres of welded edging were applied. The whole welding process took 2680 man hours. Thanks to Adam Humphries for finding out this detail.

25 Contrast Benjamin Buchloh's critical comments on Smith's and Caro's welding practice in NEO-AVANT-GARDE AND CULTURE INDUSTRY: ESSAYS ON EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN ART FROM 1955 TO 1975, Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 2000, p. 8.

26 These last formulations owe a great deal to recent conversations with Andrew Benjamin about the role of drawing in contemporary architecture; see also his very suggestive essay 'The Preliminary: Notes on the Force of Drawing', in THE JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE, no. 19, 2014, pp. 470-

482.